



Governing Board, Online 18-19 Nov 2020
Agenda Item: 8
Document Name:
2GB2020_DOC8 REPORT YOUTH ADVISOR
Purpose: To be received

Activity report - Youth advisor Lea Schlenker from Dec 2019 to Oct 2020

The last report in my capacity as youth advisor was given in November 2019. I pointed to the need to develop some kind of structure to improve the participation of youth (i.e. young adults, 18–30 years) in CEC’s work and activities. I proposed to nominate “youth experts”. However, I also emphasised that cooperation with already existing ecumenical youth organisations such as WSCF-E (World Student Christian Federation Europe) and EYCE (Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe) is essential, as CEC does not aim at duplicating these structures. In their responses to the report, the Governing Board members underlined the importance of cooperation with WSCF-E and EYCE, which would also contribute to strengthen these bodies, and discussed the role and nature of “youth experts”.

1. Meetings with EYCE/WSCF-E

Pursuing a closer cooperation with EYCE and WSCF-E, I contacted their respective chairpersons and agreed with them on regular meetings, which were held on 25 April, 27 June, and 14 October 2020. Initially, the first meeting was planned to be in person, however, the Covid-19 pandemic made this impossible, so we gathered online instead. Before our first meeting, I contacted CEC’s staff members, who gave me valuable ideas regarding how cooperation with youth could look like in their respective areas of work. After each meeting, I sent the minutes of our meetings to CEC’s General Secretary, Dr Jørgen Skov Sørensen, who has shown much interest and support in the area of youth.

In our meetings, we shared information on the structures of our organisation, on their current projects, on challenges that we face, and on possible ways of cooperation. Our regular meetings have proven to be very fruitful. They improved the exchange of information, the personal contact between the organisations, and the opportunities of cooperation.

2. Challenges for youth

Youth faces similar challenges in ecumenical work as other organisations do: funding, communication to members and their commitment to the organisations’ work, and, in times of the Covid-19 pandemic, insecurities both regarding the planning or holding of events and regarding the organisations’ future. A special challenge for youth remains that very few of those working in the field are employed by their organisations or churches – most work is voluntary, unpaid labour. The regular meetings of WSCF-E, EYCE, and CEC representatives is one way to



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face these challenges together: We openly discuss all challenges and share good and bad experiences/practices on how to deal with them.

3. Current cooperation

Currently, the cooperation of CEC with youth organisations is based on youth participation in Thematic Groups and on individual contacts via my capacity as a youth advisor. I have received positive feedback on the involvement of young members in CEC's Thematic Groups on human rights, on eco justice, and in the task force for communication. My additional activities have been the following:

- Summer School on Human Rights, July 2020: Participation as an attendee in most panels, moderation in the last panel on "Raising hate in time of COVID-19. The experience of young people".

As participants and moderators of this panel, we stayed in touch and launched a network called "FoRêL (Female Religious Leaders)", opening up a space to promote women as religious leaders and to share their experiences. This has evolved from CEC's summer school, but is an independent endeavour. However, CEC kindly offers technical support for the first three webinars of FoRêL. The first webinar will be held on 23 Nov, 6pm CET.

- WSCF-E organises a joint statement by different religious organisations on eco justice. I participate in this process, the result of which will be communicated via CEC's news channels, among others.
- CCME held an online event on "Youth, Faith and Migration" on 26 October, which I attended. As a follow-up, CCME's General Secretary Torsten Moritz contacted me and we agreed to discuss the role of youth in the area of "Being Church together" in December.

4. Assessment of current work and proposals for the future

The experiences from last year have deepened my impression that CEC's commitment in the area of youth should mostly rely on cooperation with already existing organisations. I think it is good to always appoint one young Governing Board member as youth advisor, who has the following responsibilities:

- Communication with ecumenical youth organisations, particularly WSCF-E and EYCE
- Contact to young members in CEC's Thematic Groups



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- Contribution to the preparation of CEC's Youth Pre-Assembly before each General Assembly
- Paying attention that youth is represented in all relevant working mechanisms of CEC

Further aspects and ideas on how youth can be integrated into CEC's work and processes are highly appreciated.